

**Remarks of Governor Haley Barbour  
on being named nation's Public Official of the Year  
by Governing Magazine**

*Wednesday, November 15, 2006  
Washington, D.C.*

It is a great honor to be chosen the Nation's Governor of the Year, and I am grateful to Governing Magazine for this award and for all the very generous comments that have been made.

But Marsha and I think this is really a tribute to the people of Mississippi, whose strength, character, and spirit shown through so brightly as our state bore the brunt of the worst natural disaster in American history.

So I accept this on behalf of those citizens and in recognition of their extraordinary courage and selflessness.

I accept it with gratitude for our magnificent first responders, who put service before self despite unbelievable obstacles and knowledge of personal losses; and with admiration for our local officials, who never lost unity of command or continuity of purpose even in the face of utter devastation.

We often say our government employees are the state's most important resource. Katrina affirmed that statement with a bold explanation point. In the face of obliteration on an unprecedented scale, Mississippi state employees were incredible public servants. Operating out of parking lots in the backs of automobiles, they did whatever it took to make sure their constituents got food or had their medicine or, later, that they were signed up for disaster unemployment assistance. These people saved lives, stopped looters, cleared roads and so much more.

No governor could be as happy as I am to accept this honor on behalf of such people as our employees in the State of Mississippi.

We governors, like other chief executives, often do not know what problems we will face. My campaign focused on job creation, tort reform, education, workforce development and the budget: returning our budget to an honestly balanced budget without raising anybody's taxes. Marsha and I never dreamed of Katrina with all her wrath.

But you do what you have to do. Like those strong, resilient, self-reliant people in south Mississippi, we didn't look for someone to blame. We didn't mope or whine. Mississippians aren't into victimhood.

No, after the storm knocked us down so hard we got back up, hitched up our britches and went to work, helping ourselves and helping our neighbors.

Working together, we searched and rescued; we cleaned up and recovered. Now we're rebuilding.

We've had a lot of help, help from the Bush Administration and help from the Congress. We're especially grateful to Sen. Cochran, Sen. Lott and our Congressional Delegation. Our sister states have been phenomenal and the outpouring of private philanthropy and volunteerism has appropriately also been the greatest outpouring in the history of our country, just as this disaster is the greatest disaster in the history of our country. The faith-based groups, the churches, they're still coming almost a year and a half later.

With that help and because of the character and spirit of the strong people of Mississippi, our Coast will come back bigger and better than ever. We've already started, and your honoring our state with this prestigious recognition of achievement is a very fitting tribute to Mississippi and its people. Not so much to me, but to the citizens I am blessed to represent. Thank you very much.

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